

STATEMENT OF  
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NEW JERSEY STATE ATHLETIC CONTROL BOARD COMMISSIONER  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION  
UNITED STATES SENATE

JULY 23, 1998

Chairman McCain, Senator Hollings, Senator Bryan and Distinguished  
Members of the Committee:

Good morning, my name is Larry Hazzard and I am the Commissioner of

the New Jersey State Athletic Control Board. It is my pleasure to come before you this morning to testify in support of the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act.

At the age of 13, I entered the boxing world as a fighter. After becoming a three-time Golden Gloves Champion, I served as an amateur and professional referee for more than 18 years. I have been New Jersey's Commissioner since 1985. Throughout my years in the industry, I have been exposed to all aspects of the boxing world and I understand, as well as anyone, the need for reform.

Mr. Chairman, New Jersey commends Congress on the initiative it has taken to coordinate boxing rules and regulations among the states. Regardless of how much reform and advancement we accomplish in New Jersey, without uniformity among the states, our efforts to protect the athletes are not very effective. The Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act will aid us in our fight to protect boxers from coercive and unfair business practices.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, New Jersey has been a leader, among the boxing states, in implementing reform. The steps that New Jersey has taken have revived the integrity of the sport in our state. We have made great strides in developing and implementing uniform medical regulations. In December of 1997, New Jersey invited doctors from Nevada, Illinois, California and New York, to come to our state and discuss medical standards in the boxing industry. These doctors drafted a set of unified minimum medical requirements which we believe are the most comprehensive medical requirements in the sport of boxing. These rules were proposed to the Association of Boxing Commissions for adoption at their May 1998 conference in New Mexico.

I am also proud of New Jersey's comprehensive and strict boxing rules and regulations. Some of the protections found in the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act are already practiced in New Jersey. For example, New Jersey regulations prohibit boxer/manager contractual options of any kind, and set the maximum contract term as a period not to exceed five years. In addition, New Jersey closely governs potential conflicts of interest between promoters and fighters. Our regulations prohibit a promoter from having a direct or indirect financial interest in any athlete competing on a premises owned or leased by the promoter.

The proposed federal legislation addresses the task of regulating the sanctioning organizations. New Jersey has experience in attempting to standardize these organizations' basic rules. In October of 1997, New Jersey held a meeting of the five (5) major sanctioning organizations (IBF, WBA, WBC, WBO and WBU) to discuss, develop and implement unification of the basic rules governing championship matches. The organizations agreed on a new set of standards which will govern championship bouts conducted in the United States. New Jersey implemented these rules immediately and forwarded the new standards to the Association of Boxing Commissions for adoption as national policy for all championship bouts in the United States.

New Jersey supports the provisions of this act that mandate the public disclosure of the objective ranking criteria which sanctioning organizations use to rate fighters. Objective and consistent rating criteria coupled with due process for fighters who fall from the rankings will help foster public confidence and trust in the sport of boxing, as well as protect fighters from possible unfair

treatment and career sabotage.

Mr. Chairman, the major issue New Jersey faces in regulating public interest disclosure policies is enforcement. Our public interest disclosure rules regarding contracts are similar to those found in the proposed federal legislation. However, even though we receive the requested information, we cannot determine if there has been a violation unless a dispute occurs between the parties.

We need to develop regulation and reform that works not only in theory, but in everyday practice. Imposing regulations on sanctioning organizations to disclose various fees, payments, and complimentary services, may appear to strengthen our ability to regulate, however, an important criteria is missing: a standard defining "fair and equal fees and payments" must be established. Different sanctioning bodies charge varying fees and payments. This lack of standardization will create enforcement problems for state regulators.

Mr. Chairman, boxing reform is a slow process, many of the practices we seek to reform have been in existence for more than 100 years. The State of New Jersey would like to thank the sponsors and this committee for taking this important step in support of our efforts to bring the sport of boxing into the 21st century.

Thank you.